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PRESS RELEASE

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Dutch Woman and 17 Other Members of FARC Terrorist Organization Indicted on Hostage-Taking and Weapons Charges

WASHINGTON - Tanja Anamary Nijmeijer, a Dutch national who moved to Colombia and joined the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2002, and 17 other members of the FARC designated foreign terrorist organization were indicted by a federal grand jury in Washington, D.C. today on seven counts of terrorism and weapons charges arising out of their participation in the hostage-taking of three American citizens in the Republic of Colombia.

The indictment, returned by a grand jury in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, was announced by Assistant Attorney General for National Security David Kris, Ronald C. Machen Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, and John V. Gillies, Special Agent in Charge, of the FBI's Miami Division.

The three former hostages – Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell and Thomas Howes – were held in the Colombian jungle by members of the FARC for more than five years, until their rescue by Colombian military forces on July 2, 2008.

The indictment charges Nijmeijer, 32, and the other 17 defendants with one count of conspiracy to commit hostage taking, three substantive counts of hostage taking, one count of using and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence, and two counts of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Sixteen of the defendants are being charged for the first time; two others, charged earlier, face new counts in today's indictment.

If convicted of these charges, each defendant would face a maximum term of up to 60 years of incarceration, the maximum sentence permitted under Colombian law for Colombian nationals extradited to the United States for prosecution. The weapons charge carries a statutory mandatory minimum penalty of 30 years incarceration. Four of the 18 defendants are also

charged in Count Two of the indictment with an eighth count, the premeditated murder of a United States National outside of the United States, done during the perpetration of, and attempt to perpetrate, a kidnapping, which also carries a maximum sentence of up to 60 years incarceration in this case.

Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, Thomas Janis and a Colombian national, Sgt. Luis Alcides Cruz, were conducting counter-drug aerial surveillance in southern Colombia on February 13, 2003, when their Cessna aircraft experienced engine failure and was forced to make an emergency landing on a remote mountainside where a large contingent of FARC guerrillas were gathered. All five occupants of the plane survived the crash, but were immediately taken captive by the FARC guerrillas. The pilot of the plane, Thomas Janis, and the Colombian national, Sgt. Cruz, were both immediately executed by the FARC, and their bodies were left near the crash site. The other three, Mr. Gonsalves, Mr. Stansell, and Mr. Howes, were held under barbaric conditions in the jungle for more than five years.

The indictment alleges that the defendants used choke harnesses, chains, padlocks, and wires to bind the necks and wrists of the American hostages to prevent their escape, and constructed a large barbed-wire concentration camp to hold dozens of civilian hostages in the jungle for more than a year, including the three Americans.

As Colombian rescue efforts intensified in later years, the indictment alleges that the defendants forced the hostages to move long distances, from camp to camp, including a grueling 40-day march while carrying heavy backpacks through dense jungle to outrun Colombian military forces. The defendants are also charged with forging an agreement to kill the hostages, if necessary, to prevent their escape or rescue.

“We will not tire in our pursuit of all those responsible for this crime. I applaud the many prosecutors, agents and analysts who have worked tirelessly to bring about these charges as we seek justice for the victims of these hostage-takings,” said David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security.

“Today's indictment demonstrates our firm resolve to bring to justice every last FARC commander who played any part in this brutal act of terrorism,” U.S. Attorney Machen stated.

“The FARC has authorized the use of violence and attacks against American citizens to forward their mission of terrorism. Today's indictment represents the continuing commitment of the FBI to fully investigate and to bring to justice terrorists throughout the world who harm citizens of the United States,” said Special Agent in Charge Gillies.

The indictment sheds new light on the international aspect of the FARC's hostage-taking enterprise, and this crime in particular. For example, it alleges that the hostages were taken to a meeting in 2003 with several senior members of the FARC's Estado Mayor Central, who told the Americans that their continued detention as U.S. citizens would assist the FARC's goals by increasing international pressure on the government of Colombia to capitulate to the FARC's

demands. The FARC published communiques articulating their political demands on the Internet, in Spanish and English, to be read in the United States and, in 2003, released a proof of life video articulating their demands to Colombian and American media outlets.

The indictment also alleges that the defendants transported the hostages, at times, outside Colombia and into the Republic of Venezuela, in order to prevent the Colombian police and military from rescuing the hostages.

Four of the defendants in today's indictment, Carlos Alberto Garcia, also known as "Oscar Montero" and "El Paisa," Juan Carlos Reina Chica, also known as "Farid," Jaime Cortes Mejia, also known as "Davison," and Carlos Arturo Cespedes Tovar, also known as "Uriel," are charged with murder of a United States National outside of the United States, for their involvement in the kidnapping when Thomas Janis was shot in the back of the head with an assault rifle by FARC guerrillas. The indictment also alleges that "El Paisa" gave the order to shoot at the disabled plane as it was attempting to land.

Defendant Tanja Nijmeijer gained notoriety in recent years in Colombia, after her personal journal was recovered in a Colombian military raid in 2007, and excerpts of a video interview of her were released to the international press in 2010. On the recently released video, Nijmeijer describes how she first learned about Colombia's guerrilla war when she was still a student at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. She describes how she helped the FARC as an operative in Bogota before eventually joining the group as an armed insurgent in November, 2002. Nijmeijer states on the video that she will be a "guerrilla until we are victorious or until we die, and there's no turning back."

Today's charging document represents the fifth indictment issued in the District of Columbia against various FARC members involved in the kidnappings.

In 2005, Colombia extradited Juvenal Ovidio Ricardo Palmera Pineda, also known as Simon Trinidad, to the United States in this case. He was subsequently convicted at a jury trial of conspiracy to commit hostage taking, and is now serving a 60-year sentence in federal prison. Chief Judge Royce C. Lamberth, who sentenced defendant Trinidad in 2008, called the crime an act of terrorism that was heinous, barbaric, and "against the law of all civilized nations." The Colombian Supreme Court declined to extradite three other conspirators who were charged with this hostage-taking case in 2007 and 2008, and four other conspirators who were charged in 2003 have been killed or died in Colombian military operations in recent years.

Two of the defendants in today's indictment - Carlos Alberto Garcia, also known as El Paisa, and Jose Ignacio Gonzalez Perdomo, also known as Alfredo Arenas - were charged previously in an indictment returned in the District of Columbia in 2003, shortly after the three Americans were taken hostage. Today's indictment re-files each of those charges and adds a new homicide count against El Paisa. Today's indictment also adds a new weapons charge and an additional material support charge against both men.

The United States government, through the Rewards for Justice Program of the Department of State, is offering a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the apprehension or conviction of any FARC commanders involved in the hostage taking of Keith Stansell, Thomas Howes, and Marc Gonsalves, and the murder of Thomas Janis. The Department of State's Rewards for Justice Program has been employed worldwide to fight terrorism. Since the program's inception in 1984, the United States has paid more than \$77 million to more than 50 persons who provided credible information that led to the apprehension of individuals or prevented acts of international terrorism.

The newest charges were the result of an investigation led by the FBI's Miami Field Office and are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth Kohl of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, with the support of David Cora and Brian Murtagh in the Counterterrorism Section of the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Assistance also was provided by the Directorate of Intelligence (DIPOL) and the Anti-Kidnapping Unit (GAULA) of the Colombian National Police, as well as the FBI Office of the Legal Attaché in Bogota, Colombia.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless found guilty.

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